

November 30, 2007

Extended Comment Period for Silica

Oregon OSHA - Proposed Changes To Silica and Corrections to Air Contaminants In General Industry and Construction

NOTE: Because of requests received during the open comment period, Oregon OSHA is extending the comment period on this rulemaking through February 4, 2008.

Oregon OSHA proposes to change the permissible limit for airborne concentrations of respirable silica to a fixed limit of 0.05 milligrams per cubic meter (mg/m³). The formula and footnote (e) for Silica in Table Z-3 in the Air Contaminants standards in general industry and construction will also be amended. Both of these changes reflect better scientific processes for determining airborne respirable exposures, and the calculation used to determine exposures continues to cause confusion.

Crystalline silica, also known as quartz, is a natural constituent of the earth's crust and is a basic component of sand and granite. However, airborne exposures to silica can lead to silicosis. Silicosis is a disease of the lungs that can cause fibrosis or scar tissue formations in the lungs that reduce the lung's ability to work to extract oxygen from the air.

Data was evaluated from silica samples collected by Oregon OSHA consultants and compliance officers, as well as data provided by SAIF and AGC. This represented 17 years of data and 1355 individual samples. 40 of these samples, approximately 3 percent, that were below the current PEL would be over the new PEL. However, at least 16 of those were at establishments that had operations that exceeded the current PEL for silica by other samples.

Changes will also be made in the Z-1 table in air contaminants for accuracy, correction, and uniformity.

Oregon OSHA proposes to adopt these changes into general industry and construction.

To get a copy: Our web site – www.orosha.org Rules/Compliance, then Proposed Rules
Or call the OR-OSHA Resource Center at 503-947-7447

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Comment period closes: **February 4, 2008**

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